THREE TREMENDOUS TRIFLES

FELTON B. ELKINS

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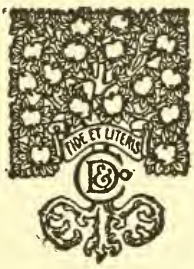
BY

FELTON B. ELKINS



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THREE TREMENDOUS TRIFLES

THE BELGIAN BABY

[A FARCE]

CHARACTERS

TONY HARCOURT, *a confirmed, though not infirm, bachelor,* 18 *to* 45.

SIBLY, *his man-servant, nurse, Judge Advocate, etc. Age appropriate.*

CONSTANCE BLAKNEY, *a professional Society girl, but showing breeding in spite of it;* 21 *in years,* 35 *in experience.*

VIVETTE CLAMORE, *an unprofessional, grown up to* 18— *and other things.*

NOTE: Both women are (as the time is placed several years hence) dressed in an exaggerated vogue of today; since styles will repeat but can seldom retrieve.

SCENE: *In sitting-room of* TONY HARCOURT'S *Town Flat.*

TIME: *Nineteen years in the future.*

SETTING: *The walls are neutral to the hangings. The furniture masculine in spite of woman's emancipation. One still needs a place of fire, this one is Back Centre, in the form of an antique Russian stove, lofty and broad-tiled (period of the Romanoffs). A more than easy chair is to Left of this with an out-*

of-door and air-cushioned swing couch opposite Right. There is a normal-shaped "kidney" desk and chair down Centre toward Left with a paper cutter, pile of letters, telephone, on it. The wall lights are ship's-shape, the pictures are entirely of aeroplanes in many altitudes and attitudes. Books in neat piles about the floor except for a large tin box on a stool in front of the stove in which is a litter of photographs, letters, a faded bunch of flowers, a pair of garters and a fan, etc.; and an open trunk with certain still manly articles of wearing apparel in disorder hanging over its side. A card tray on a Greek pedestal by door back Right and near it the House Telephone. Other Exits are up Left and down Right. French windows back Left and down Left looking out on blank walls. The ground cloth is indifferent. The lighting denotes morning.

At Rise: Discover Harcourt *seated on extreme edge of easy-chair. He is dressed in pepper and salt trousers tight from the knee down with pressed "turn up"; a frilled shirt-front, short brocade dressing-gown of aubergine and blue, etc., Morocco slippers; also he has on a tall silk hat. He is whistling a snatch from the old Folk Song, "Can't Get Away to Marry You To-day, My Wife Won't Let Me," while rummaging through the contents of the tin box in front of him.*

Enter Sibly *up* left, *with an evening dress coat and low waistcoat over one arm; a pair of varnished*

blucher boots in his other hand. SIBLY *is the early Victorian English man-servant, now only differentiated from his master in that he wears an Eton jacket with broad flat linen collar and flowing bow tie. Otherwise, he has whiskers.*

SIBLY.

H'I wouldn't sing that if I were you, sir.

HARCOURT.

It is an ill omen air. [*Laughing, waves before* SIBLY *a bunch of letters; then throwing them into the stove.*] Memories of Maude, Sibly.

SIBLY.

Still at it! This is too bad of you, sir, and your 'at on in the house. That's an h'ill omen, too, sir.

HARCOURT.

Did it to keep in mind I was to be——

SIBLY.

Married h' off—this morning?

HARCOURT.

No, married out! [*The desk telephone rings.* SIBLY *hastily crosses to it.*]

SIBLY.

Hello, no—line's busy—Mr. Harcourt's busy—yes. You're busy, too, h'if you ask me.

HARCOURT.

What's that?

SIBLY.

[*Echoing on telephone.*]. What's that? But I'm positive, 'e don't know you, miss, 'ow so?—Because Mr. Harcourt don't know nobody I don't know all about. What? You say you're h'all alone with his address, miss? That's safe enough if you'll h'only remain so—yes. [*Hangs up.*]

HARCOURT.

Who was that?

SIBLY.

[*Crossing up to* HARCOURT *with a sigh.*] Another h'applicant I should judge, sir.

HARCOURT.

[*Sniffing at another bundle of letters.*] Aniseed—Carrie—Poor Carrie—how we adored each other; for a whole month. [*Throws them after the first lot.*]

SIBLY.

[*Who sets down the boots by his chair and kneels.*] Come, Mr. Harcourt, sir, your past must wait on your wedding, sir. You *must* be dressed for the part.

HARCOURT.

[*Kicking off one slipper with a laugh.*] Strange feeling this being dressed for one's part, instead of one's past, Sibly. [*As* SIBLY *slips on one boot, makes a face at him.*]

HARCOURT.

Will Miss Constance allow me to fly, do you think? [*Indicates aeronautical pictures.*]

SIBLY.

Not 'at h'any such great h'altitude, sir.

HARCOURT.

Think I shall make a very faithful husband to Miss Constance?

SIBLY.

[*Nodding toward the box.*] Judging from the contents of the room, sir, I should find it 'ard to say.

HARCOURT.

Unkind of you, Sibly, when you know I've spent this entire morning destroying my past. [*Spying a pair of pink frilled garters with blue rosebuds in the box and making a dive for them.*] But ye know, I've always had a feeling that a man should never be judged by his past, but his personality.

SIBLY.

[*Poking him back again into the chair by jerking his other foot.*] I shall never 'ave you ready in time, if you don't——

HARCOURT.

[*Holding out the garter for* SIBLY'S *inspection.*] Look who's here.

SIBLY.

[*Tartly as he finishes with boots.*] Most h'indiscreet to keep garters——

HARCOURT.

Ah! but they once encircled such delightful legs; hadn't the heart then to—— [*Makes as if to throw them into the stove.*]

SIBLY.

[*Stopping him.*] I wouldn't now, sir. Rubber still smells badly. [*Crosses for waistcoat and coat.*]

HARCOURT.

[*Taking a lot of photographs from the box and looking at the first one, shaking his head rather sadly.*] Oh! thou fool sentimentalist. [*Over the top of photograph to* SIBLY *who through the following attempts to get him out of dressing gown and into his waistcoat and coat.*] We always admire the blondes who take us in, Sibly.

SIBLY.

You used to run to blondes, if you remember, sir.

HARCOURT.

Yes, now I run from them—clever girl, Celeste. [*Breaks photograph in two, then another, whistling snatches from the same tune, "Can't Get Away," etc.*]

HARCOURT.

[*At last, as* SIBLY *in desperation takes out watch.*] What's the time?

SIBLY.

Past eleven.

HARCOURT.

We never seem to be able to get away from my past, do we? [*Handing last remaining photograph to* SIBLY, *as he slips out of dressing gown.*]

SIBLY.

[*Becoming so engrossed in face of photograph that he forgets to hold* HARCOURT'S *waistcoat, who snatches it.*] This is too bad of you, Mr. Harcourt, sir. You've been trying to 'old something out on me again.

HARCOURT.

Here. [*Snatching photograph.*] Loosen that buckle strap! [*Then turning it sideways and reading inscription.*] "Your Belgian Baby, age 18, at Liege." [*Shaking his head.*] Don't know it—new one on me. [*Disattaching folded slip pinned to photograph.*] Here's something. Why, it's a receipt for the Belgian baby.

SIBLY.

I h'understood *receipts* was h'only to be h'identified with cocktails, sir.

HARCOURT.

Quite right, Sibly, this one simply identifies a female of the species, that's all. [*House telephone buzzes, and* SIBLY *goes to answer it.*]

HARCOURT.

[*Looking again at slip.*] This particular one was adopted *for* me, signed for by my guardian in *my* name eighteen years ago, and a check sent yearly for its support.

SIBLY.

[*With ear to receiver.*] Telegram? Bring it h'up! [*Opening door back Right.*] Very careless of the guardian, I consider, sir—suppose it was to grow up?

HARCOURT.

Babies often do, I believe. [*Puts down photograph and pocketing slip, during following, gets into coat and straightens tie and linen.*]

SIBLY.

And per'aps—make trouble——

HARCOURT.

Women always do.

SIBLY.

Moral, sir: avoid the appearance of evil.

HARCOURT.

Avoid the appearance of babies! [*Over to desk, takes up paper cutter, to open mail; does so while* SIBLY *goes out back Right for telegram.* SIBLY, *returning, picks up salvar from pedestal and with telegram, comes down to* HARCOURT.]

HARCOURT.

[*Slits it open with paper cutter and reads*:] "Can't come away and marry you to-day, your past won't let me." [*Drops paper cutter.*]

SIBLY.

Your song, sir—I said it was—— [*Shakes his head, picks up paper cutter.*]

HARCOURT.

[*Sitting down, pressing his hand to his head.*] Sibly! She's chucked me.

SIBLY.

I didn't think it of Miss Constance.

HARCOURT.

Miss Constance? [*With a short, hard laugh.*] Inconstance, if you ask me. [SIBLY *nods mournfully.*]

HARCOURT.

Sibly! I can't bear the humiliation of it! I have never been thrown over before! I am resolved to kill myself. [*Getting to his feet.*] Better still, you shall kill me!

SIBLY.

You're not serious, Mr. Harcourt? [HARCOURT *nods grimly.*] You'll 'ave to excuse me, sir. [*Turns away.*]

HARCOURT.

[*Stopping him.*] Sibly, this will be the last favor I shall ask of you.

SIBLY.

Ho! I can quite see that, sir, if it comes h'off.

HARCOURT.

But you can't afford to refuse me. [*Grabbing up the paper cutter.*] I shall make it so well worth your time. [*Thrusting it into* SIBLY'S *hand.*]

SIBLY.

H'I should be doing time, right enough. [*With some excitement.*] But me be'ave such a blighter?

HARCOURT.

[*Sharply.*] No, I'm the one who's blighted—I've often heard men talk about dying of disappointed love. I want to be the first authentic martyr to the cause.

SIBLY.

[*Stepping back and staring at* HARCOURT.] I think you must 'ave lost your 'ead completely, sir, I do indeed.

HARCOURT.

[*Seizing* SIBLY'S *hand and guiding it toward his own throat.*] Not yet, that's what I want to do. [SIBLY *pulls away.*] I'll give you twenty-five thousand to oblige me, come, that's a good fellow. [*The house telephone buzzes loudly.*]

SIBLY.

[*In relief, dropping knife on table, goes up to answer it.*]

HARCOURT.

[*Jumping over to windows and looking down.*] A "Tank!"

SIBLY.

[*Listening at telephone and getting no answer, presses button to open lower door.*] Maybe Miss Constance h'after all, sir.

HARCOURT.

[*Turning away sadly.*] No, she always has two men on the box—it's only a taxi. [SIBLY *goes out into passage.* HARCOURT *seizes opportunity to grab up the paper cutter and starts to fall on it, but he misses his guess and only succeeds in upsetting a pile of letters on the desk. Gets up again and shakes his head, looking dejectedly at paper cutter, at the same time rubbing his side.*]

VOICE.

[*Without; in high pitched, foreign key.*] Why for I pay? No! papa, he will pay, yes.

ENTER VIVETTE CLAMORE, *back* RIGHT.

[VIVETTE *has peroxide yellow hair under a hat with white Bruge lace veil and carries a long brightly beaded bag.*]

VIVETTE.

[*Throwing out her arms to him.*] Papa! Papa!

HARCOURT.

[*Rushing to her, paper cutter in hand.*] I don't know who you are but—but you can do it, you must!

VIVETTE.

[*Seizing hold of small chair and raising it high above her head.*] Allez! Allez! For two sous, I kill you.

HARCOURT.

I'll give you fifty thousand!

VIVETTE.

[*Dropping chair and throwing her arms about his neck.*] Ah! You are so noble, open fist—merci, merci, little papa. [SIBLY *who has entered and taken in situation now slams the door.* VIVETTE *jumps at the noise and turns to* SIBLY.]

VIVETTE.

Ah! Santa Claus.

SIBLY.

[*Pompously.*] You've got into the wrong flat, Miss.

VIVETTE.

[*Tapping beaded bag.*] Why for? I alone 'ave the address; I say it to the telephone.

SIBLY.

[*Same.*] I fear you've made a mistake, miss. [*With a sharp look at* HARCOURT.] That is, h'as far as I know.

HARCOURT.

Yes, because as far as I *know,* I'm still a bachelor.

VIVETTE.

[*With a look at him, then to* SIBLY *and with outstretched arms.*] Then per'aps it is you are my papa?

SIBLY.

[*With great dignity.*] For shame, miss, I am a married person; without h'issue.

VIVETTE.

[*Somewhat crestfallen, then suddenly diving into the bag, brings out somewhat rumpled paper, opens it, smiles.*] Ah! Here I 'ave. [*Showing it to* HARCOURT.] You cannot believe something so true? [*Waits.*] My mamma she 'ave it from an aero-naughty journal.

HARCOURT.

[*Taking paper, moodily.*] I must have been extremely absent-minded. [*To* SIBLY.] Did you ever hear me mention the fact of my being a father?

SIBLY.

[*Plainly embarrassed.*] Not the sort of thing one'd h'exactly mention in your position, sir.

HARCOURT.

That sort of thing happens *in* the best of positions.

SIBLY.

[*Looking fixedly at* VIVETTE *who has lifted her veil and, removing her hat, stands looking first at one then the other.*] Ha! I think *I* can h'explain the difficulty, sir. [*To* VIVETTE.] What is your name, if you please, miss?

VIVETTE.

Vivette, Vivette—Clamore——

HARCOURT.

Vivette—Clamore—where the deuce have I heard——
[*Puts hand in pocket, pulls out slip of paper.*]

SIBLY.

[*Crossing to desk.*] The photograph, sir. [*Takes it up.*]

HARCOURT.

[*Looking over* SIBLY'S *shoulder.*] Great heavens, the Belgian baby!

VIVETTE.

Oui, oui, she is my mamma.

HARCOURT.

[*Who has consulted slip of paper.*] Vivette Clamore —she's authentic enough; a *bona fide* baby.

VIVETTE.

Then why for you do not make me a welcome—you never no kiss me. You not ask me for sit down—and I come so long way from Liege to see my papa. [*Looks about to cry.*] But I arrive to stay! [*Sits.* HARCOURT *and* SIBLY *look at each other.*]

HARCOURT.

[*To him.*] Think of something—will you?

SIBLY.

You might take her to an asylum—or the seashore—or—[*As* HARCOURT *shakes his head.*] Per'aps I could take her h'out for a walk in the park, and lose 'er.

HARCOURT.

What! In those clothes? Never!

VIVETTE.

[*Jumping up.*] Ah! it is my clothes who do not please my papa. [*Starting to unfasten her bodice.*] *Eh bien,* very quickly then I can take off——

HARCOURT.

Good Lord!

VIVETTE.

Ah! I do not care—it is mos' easy. [SIBLY *hurries to door up* LEFT.]

SIBLY.

You'll 'ave to excuse me, sir. [EXITS.]

VIVETTE.

What you *want* for I do then?

HARCOURT.

I didn't mean you to undress. [*Turns to* SIBLY.] These foreign babies certainly lose no time in—— [*Finds him gone.*]

VIVETTE.

[*Sitting down again, and beginning to cry.*] Bet I am willing so—to be very friend to you—to love you——

HARCOURT.

[*Promptly.*] Like a daughter——

VIVETTE.

Yas, and I try very much how I please you—bet you are so difficle——

HARCOURT.

Not always, believe me—but under the present circumstances. [VIVETTE *cries softly.*] Just like a woman, always willing to please, and doing just the opposite of *what* you please. Oh, now *don't* cry! Not all over those clothes.

VIVETTE.

You cannot believe something so h'awful for me—I come sick of *mon homme.* You will not become my papa, what then I do?

HARCOURT.

How can I—when I was only just *about* to be married?

VIVETTE.

[*Blithely.*] What different—a little thing like that——

HARCOURT.

Great difference. I happen to be in love.

VIVETTE.

Ah, *mon Dieu!* Then why make the trouble to marry? Marriage, it is a necessity.

HARCOURT.

Not in America—here it's a mania! [VIVETTE *shakes her head, not understanding.*]

HARCOURT.

So you must go away! [*House buzzer.* HARCOURT *goes to window.*]

[ENTER SIBLY *up* LEFT.]

HARCOURT.

[*Excitedly.*] It's the Tank.

SIBLY.

Taxi, sir?

HARCOURT.

No, you idiot—there are two men on the box.

SIBLY.

Miss Constance.

HARCOURT.

[*Roughly, at* VIVETTE'S *side.*] Here you—— [*Shakes her.*] Vivette—— [*As she pulls away.*] Darling! My fiancee mustn't see you here, come this way, hurry! [*Pushes her before him down* RIGHT.]

VIVETTE.

Aah! I come crazy with you. [*Buzzer heard again.*]

HARCOURT.

[*Seeing that* SIBLY *is trying to straighten room with the photograph in his hand, dressing gown in other.*] Never mind those things, answer the door. [*Snatches dressing gown, then pushes* VIVETTE *through door, down* RIGHT, *throwing dressing gown after her.*]

HARCOURT.

Now stay there, baby! *daughter*—till I tell you to come out. [*Follows her out—to make sure.* SIBLY *opens door up* RIGHT, *realizes he has photograph still in hand, hides it behind him; and bows as*—]

[ENTER CONSTANCE BLAKNEY, *up* RIGHT.]

[CONSTANCE *is a contrast in every way to* VIVETTE; *ultra as opposed to futurist.*]

SIBLY.

[*Trying to put photograph on pedestal.*] Morning, Miss Constance. You 'ad an appointment with Mr. Harcourt, Miss? [*The photograph slips and falls to floor.*]

CONSTANCE.

Naturally, Sibly, I'm not married to him yet. [SIBLY *picks up photograph, lays it on pedestal, face down.* CONSTANCE *"registers" having noticed this.*]

SIBLY.

'E stepped into the dining-room for a moment, Miss. [*Seizes upon* VIVETTE'S *hat unseen by* CONSTANCE.]

[ENTER HARCOURT *from dining-room down* RIGHT.]

CONSTANCE.

Ah! Tony. [SIBLY *crosses and goes out up* LEFT *with hat.* CONSTANCE *also notices this.*]

HARCOURT.

[*Stiffly.*] Good morning, Constance, I received your wire—— [*Taking off his engagement ring, holding it out to her as* CONSTANCE *laughs, coming to him; more stiffly.*] To what do I owe this unlooked for pleasure?

CONSTANCE.

[*Kissing him formally on each cheek.*] I thought my little jest had gone far enough—— [*As* HARCOURT *shows perplexity.*] I simply came to have a laugh over it—— [*Replaces ring on his finger.*]

HARCOURT.

You do intend to marry me after all?

CONSTANCE.

Certainly—— [*Looking about.*] I think you need a lot of looking after, from the contents of this room—[*Indicating pile of letters on floor by kicking them with her foot.*] Your morning mail?

HARCOURT.

Oh! No, my farewells, spent a very busy evening, there are in all twenty-one——

CONSTANCE.

[*Frigidly.*] I consider that very indelicate.

[HARCOURT *at a loss absently pulls one of the garters from his pocket.*]

CONSTANCE.

That's exactly my age.

HARCOURT.

Oh! but you're thirty-five in experience, Constance. [*Forgetting, toying with garter, self satisfied.*] Besides, there were *five* originals.

CONSTANCE.

[*Indicating garter.*] And what is that—a first edition?

HARCOURT.

This? No, this was *front* row—that is, I mean it's a present [*taking other garter from his pocket*] for you, first night you know—I mean—— [*Laughs confusedly.*]

CONSTANCE.

Tony! [*Turns away, which happens to be facing pedestal.*] Oh! [*Taking photograph off it.*] And who may this be? [*Holding up photograph of Belgian baby.*]

HARCOURT.

[*With a start.*] That, oh! why, that's the Belgian baby—— Oh! but she's—this one's different.

CONSTANCE.

All babies look alike to me——

HARCOURT.

They all *act* alike to me. [*Quickly.*] Constance, I know I've been very lax about my affairs but——

CONSTANCE.

Tony! [*Setting down photograph.*] If you *are* so ashamed of your past, you should have taken better care to keep it to yourself.

HARCOURT.

A man may repent of his sins, Constance—but he can still remember them with pleasure.

CONSTANCE.

[*As* HARCOURT *looks wildly in direction of dining-room.*] But all that will have to be changed. [HARCOURT *nods energetically.*] I cannot have a lot of loose photographs about the house. [HARCOURT *nods the same.*] They collect——

HARCOURT.

Dust?

CONSTANCE.

No, *others.* [*Proceeds to take off her hat.*]

HARCOURT.

Now, for heaven's sake, don't *you* undress, too! [CONSTANCE *arrested with her hat in air, looks at him in amazement.*] Undress here!

CONSTANCE.

I've come for luncheon. [*Laying hat on desk.*] What is the matter with you, Tony?

HARCOURT.

Sorry, but you can't have lunch—here.

CONSTANCE.

And *why* not?

HARCOURT.

You—er—it might be compromising—for me—for you.

CONSTANCE.

One can't compromise a woman nowadays, one can only embarrass her.

HARCOURT.

Not till after we're married—you simply can't——

CONSTANCE.

But *I arranged* with the department of justice to postpone the marriage and re-date the license—for today week.

HARCOURT.

Well, I'm not hungry—we needn't eat for a week——

CONSTANCE.

Don't be absurd, I shall certainly stay! [*Sits down.*]

HARCOURT.

[*Rushing to door up* LEFT.] Sibly—Sibly!
[ENTER SIBLY *up* LEFT.]

HARCOURT.

Miss Constance is stopping for lunch.

SIBLY.

[*Wide-eyed.*] Lunch, sir——? But—the receipt, sir —the receipt for the cocktails?

HARCOURT.

[*Without thinking.*] Don't have any.

SIBLY.

[*Persisting.*] But they're *'ere,* sir.

CONSTANCE.

Then we'll have our cocktail now, Sibly.

SIBLY.

You've left them in the *dining*-room, sir. [HARCOURT *laughs foolishly.*]

CONSTANCE.

In the dining-room? [*Starts for dining-room.*]

HARCOURT.

No—not in there!

[ENTER VIVETTE *from door down* RIGHT. *She is now clad in* HARCOURT'S *bob-tailed dressing gown, and devouring some kind of fruit.*]

VIVETTE.

[*With a stare at* CONSTANCE; *then politely.*] *Bon jour* —Mademoiselle.

CONSTANCE.

I suspected something of the sort! [*To* HARCOURT, *with dignity.*] Will you be good enough to explain this young person's presence in your rooms at this hour of the morning——

HARCOURT.

[*Collapsing into a chair.*] Ask Sibly.

VIVETTE.

Yes, ask Santa Claus.

CONSTANCE.

I shall ask Sibly—kindly to leave us alone—with—— [*Indicates* VIVETTE. SIBLY *bows, takes* CONSTANCE'S *hat, and* EXITS *up* LEFT.]

HARCOURT.

Constance, I do love you!

VIVETTE.

Yes, 'e tell me private——

CONSTANCE.

I consider, Tony, you could have at least made an exception to your usual habits then on the morning of your wedding.

HARCOURT.

But you said yourself the wedding was to be postponed.

CONSTANCE.

It is now—[*Dramatically*]—indefinitely postponed.

VIVETTE.

Non, non, Mademoiselle, no postpone—my papa. [HARCOURT *laughs hysterically.*]

CONSTANCE.

Since it pleases you also to make light of it. [*Looks for her hat.*]

HARCOURT.

Oh! Constance, I did try to do otherwise—I spent the entire morning—and I was succeeding splendidly——

CONSTANCE.

[*With a wave of the hand toward* VIVETTE.] When she comes out in those clothes? Where *is* my hat?

VIVETTE.

Oh! I tell you plain about the clothes; papa—[*Pointing to* HARCOURT *who throws up his hands*]—he say he do not like my clothes on me—what you want for I do? I take 'em off.

CONSTANCE.

I've heard *enough*——

HARCOURT.

I can explain. [*Hunts for certificate.*]

CONSTANCE.

I was not aware you had been *married* before.

HARCOURT.

Neither was I—I haven't!

VIVETTE.

No, no, 'e is not marry, bet 'e was very friend to me—Beside everybody keep babies; I am 'is *Belgian* baby.

HARCOURT.

War baby—don't you understand—there is a great distinction in the nationality of babies!

CONSTANCE.

All I say is I am *too* relieved to have found out in time—that you were a *father*. Kindly ask your man to bring in my hat.

VIVETTE.

Mais, non. Mademoiselle that is not 'is fault! being a fathair!

HARCOURT.

[*With a hopeless shrug, still hunting.*] I had nothing whatever to do with it.

CONSTANCE.

[*In an incredulous key.*] You had nothing to do with being a father?

HARCOURT.

Certainly not! I am—this baby's adopted father. [HARCOURT *at last finds certificate and brings it to* CONSTANCE.]

CONSTANCE.

[*Pushing certificate aside; going up stage.*] I care nothing for its nativity, what I do object to is a ready-made family——

HARCOURT.

Time ought to take care of that. [*Stops short.*]

CONSTANCE.

If I refused to keep loose photographs about the house —do you suppose I would keep loose babies? Will you tell Sibly—!

HARCOURT.

Sibly, by Jove! I can do nothing without Sibly. But wait—please—for God's *sake*—wait! [*Goes to door up* LEFT *calling*:] Sibly—Sibly!

VIVETTE.

What I do—I come crazy.

[ENTER SIBLY, *with hat, same.*]

HARCOURT.

At last! Sibly, you know what it is when two women don't even agree in the beginning? What chance does a man stand in the end? Sibly, draw on your imagination; you've always drawn everything from my bath to my bank account——

SIBLY.

Certainly, sir, why not h'ask the last *h'applicant* to marry you, sir? [VIVETTE *looks mystified—therefore interested.*]

CONSTANCE.

[*Imperious.*] But *I* happen to be engaged to Mr. Harcourt.

SIBLY.

[*Respectfully.*] 'E 'as the privilege to break——

HARCOURT.

[*In awe; fearful.*] My engagement? [*Looks sheepishly away, spies the pile of letters; this gives him an idea. He makes a dive and picks one up, handing it to* CONSTANCE.]

CONSTANCE.

[*Not taking it.*] If this is a practical joke, I consider it most indelicate.

HARCOURT.

It isn't; it is one of the five originals—a formal farewell, Constance. [*Looks downcast.*]

CONSTANCE.

[*Drawing herself up.*] Sibly. My hat.

[SIBLY *in his haste, having come in with* VIVETTE'S, *hands it to* CONSTANCE; *who in her flurry attempts to put it on. She looks grotesque;* VIVETTE *laughs shrilly.*]

VIVETTE.

O-oh! *Mon chapeau.* You cannot believe something so funney, eh?

HARCOURT.

[*As* CONSTANCE *throws it violently aside, seizing* VIVETTE *by the wrist; who cries out, and makes a dash for her.*] Never mind, I shall have to buy you another anyway; if you will be good enough to ask me to marry you, Vivette?

VIVETTE.

[*Staring for a moment, then like a tempest.*] Bon, bon, I will do! For the new chapeau, quickly I will do. [*Throws her arms about* HARCOURT.] Now, I 'ave two 'usband. C'est bon, *bon* ça!

CONSTANCE.

[*Who has been forced to wait while* SIBLY *has gone for her own hat.*] Ah, I knew there'd be *some*thing irregular.

HARCOURT.

At least, *I'm* not the bigamist.

VIVETTE.

Non, if I wish to marry with my papa——

CONSTANCE.

Tony, I could not bear to think I was the cause of bringing you to such a thing. I *will* be magnanimous. I will agree to take you *and* your——

SIBLY.

[*Who now has returned with hat.*] And I will be firm, miss: Mr. Harcourt must marry 'is—[*With his hand on* VIVETTE'S *shoulder*]—daughter, miss. We simply can't 'ave h'any more babies.

CONSTANCE.

You are too insolent—even for a servant, Sibly. [*Moves up stage* RIGHT; *then turning.*] Tony, I am relieved to know that you have been bullied into your terrible and depleting past.

HARCOURT.

[*Laughing foolishly.*] No, I haven't; it is self defense on Sibly's part. He's afraid otherwise he'll have to marry Vivette himself—— [*Following her up.*] I love you, Constance!

VIVETTE.

[*Now pawing* SIBLY.] Bet you say you are already marry—

SIBLY.

And a widower, 'eaven be praise'.

CONSTANCE.

Ah, that's quite satisfactory then. [*Tears up the farewell.*] And I will reconsider your proposal—I accept you, Tony.

VIVETTE.

Bon! So it is you who are—[*Throwing her arms now about* SIBLY]—mon homme!

SIBLY.

[*Dignified and doleful.*] My better—my *Belgian* 'alf.

HARCOURT.

Right! [*Taking* CONSTANCE'S *hand.*] Well [*Raising it to his lips and kissing it.*] Constance, my darling? Promise me—— [*Pointing right.*] You'll never forget that *that* was the door to the dining-room.

CONSTANCE.

[*Giving him an affectionate pat, her head close to his shoulder, discovering something, scrutinizing it closely, then picking it off gingerly; holds it up before his eyes.*] No, Tony, dear,—but what is this——?

HARCOURT.

[*With a smile.*] That? Oh! That is a very rare specimen, *now extinct*—a Belgian hair.

CURTAIN

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

[A SATIRE]

CHARACTERS.

OLGA VEDRENNE.
HENRY VEDRENNE, *her husband.*
TOM BRADFORD, *the usual friend.*
DR. WAGSTAFF
THE BISHOP } (May double.)
JUDSON, *the atmospheric footman.*

SCENE: *A private hall in* VEDRENNE'S *house.*
TIME: *The morning of the third day.*
SETTING: *The walls may be suggested by black velvet hangings with gold medallions. In the centre of the room is an elaborate burial casket with four tall brass candlesticks, one at each corner of it. At the Rise these alone are lighted—later by heavy gilt*

and old-red Venetian wall standards. A heavy carved wood and needle-work settle RIGHT *with back to "front"; and a Florentine table with high-backed chair* LEFT.

NOTE: Scene may be played in VEDRENNE'S bed-chamber with Empire bed. Exits up Right and Left.

AT RISE: JUDSON, LEFT, *dressed in the livery of a second-footman, powdered wig, etc., is* DISCOVERED *dusting unconcernedly. He stands for a moment undecided, looking at the casket, then crosses stealthily to it, peers in, starts back, peers in a second time.*

JUDSON.

[*As he turns away with a shake of the head.*] Poor Mr. Vedrenne! He sleeps at last.

[ENTER DR. WAGSTAFF, RIGHT. *He is a pompous, side-whiskered personage of fifty.*]

JUDSON.

[*Frightened.*] Who's there?

DOCTOR.

[*Sharply, coming down.*] Judson!

JUDSON.

Oh, it's you, doctor. I—I was just looking at poor Mr. Vedrenne, sir.

DOCTOR.

[*Guiding* JUDSON *away from the casket.*] You shouldn't look at the dead. Talk about the dead if you wish; that's always done, but don't look at them. It might make them nervous. [*Looking in himself; decisively.*] He does sleep at last.

JUDSON.

Yes, sir, I wonder if he dreams, sir.

DOCTOR.

How the devil should I know?

JUDSON.

He was a poet, sir.

DOCTOR.

Quite so. Perhaps he still dreams. Who knows?

JUDSON.

[*Approaching the casket.*] If he could only speak, sir. Perhaps . . . between ourselves, doctor, I don't like the look o' none of it.

DOCTOR.

No more do I. . . .

JUDSON.

Thank heavings Mr. Vedrenne's funeral is—— [*Moves to leave.*]

DOCTOR.

At nine. Nine is a smart hour this season. Er— [*Blocking his way.*] Where's your mistress?

JUDSON.

She'll be down presently, sir.

DOCTOR.

Don't tell her I'm here.

JUDSON.

Very good, sir. [*Crosses to door* RIGHT.]

DOCTOR.

Oh, Judson! Er—has Mr. Bradford been here?

JUDSON.

[*With domestic diplomacy.*] Mr. Bradford, sir?

DOCTOR.

Yes; [*Pointedly.*] you know whom I mean.

JUDSON.

Really, sir, so many people has been here to condole with Mrs. Vedrenne—sorry, sir. [EXITS RIGHT.]

[DOCTOR WAGSTAFF *looks after him, coughs, smiles, then goes quietly to the head of the casket, puts his hands in, as if to arrange the shroud. Suddenly from the depths of the casket comes a shrill clear laugh.*]

VEDRENNE'S VOICE.

Ouch! You're tickling me! [VEDRENNE *sits up in the casket. He is a thin, soft-featured man of thirty, with flowing locks, and eyes of childish bigness. He is dressed entirely in black, wears a lily as a boutonniere.*]

DOCTOR.

Harry, this is no place for such levity.

VEDRENNE.

The trouble with your profession, doctor, is that you're too professional. What, pray, could be more ludicrous than the thought of a man alive in his own coffin. Really! [*He sneezes.*] Dear, dear! I say, doctor, have you a hanky handy?

DOCTOR.

[*Presenting a handkerchief.*] There you are—one of yours; Mrs. Vedrenne's already given me some.

VEDRENNE.

Lucky I held that sneeze till Judson got out. You know, I have an idea this thing isn't too well ventilated. [*Returning the handkerchief.*] Thanks awfully. Now where's my breakfast?

DOCTOR.

[*Taking a sandwich out of his pocket and giving it to* VEDRENNE.] Hungry, eh?

VEDRENNE.

Rather. [*Attacks the sandwich ravenously.*] You know I've had some priceless thoughts in here. If I could only have jotted them down! This business of not being able to express oneself! [*Shakes his head, bites further into sandwich.*]

DOCTOR.

Never mind that now. What have you discovered; anything? . . . What have you heard?

VEDRENNE.

[*Mournfully.*] Nothing—really.

DOCTOR.

This state of affairs can't go on much longer. [VEDRENNE *nods.*] Your funeral is at nine.

VEDRENNE.

Oh, Lord, is it? I'd forgotten.

DOCTOR.

And you'll either have to be buried alive or——

VEDRENNE.

—or get something on my wife by 8:55.

DOCTOR.

Exactly.

VEDRENNE.

I do hate running on schedule. You know how I used to detest system before I was—deceased. [*Taking out cigarette case.*] Give me a light, will you?

DOCTOR.

Harry! You know I forbade——

VEDRENNE.

Can't help it. [DOCTOR *strikes match.*] Have a cigar yourself—do—to take away the smell of stale cigarette smoke.

DOCTOR.

[*After he has complied.*] Now *will* you be sensible? We have a lot to talk over, and your wife may be down any moment now.

VEDRENNE.

She never gets up till after nine.

DOCTOR

But under the circumstances——

VEDRENNE.

Not at all. Why should she do any differently? Olga's a woman of habit. She has come in here for the last two days precisely at ten, just at the time she used to give her orders to the cook, and knelt down at the foot of the casket——

DOCTOR.

And prayed?

VEDRENNE.

—and swore——

DOCTOR.

What!

VEDRENNE.

—to turn over a new leaf. [*Nudges the doctor.*] For thirty-five minutes by my watch, and then—[*With a wave of the hand.*]—off again, to return before tea, and repeat the performance; but alone—always alone.

DOCTOR.

You are certain he was never with her?

VEDRENNE.

[*Nodding.*] Tom Bradford is no coward; he likes prize fights and arguments, but he's too red-blooded and passionately fond of life to care to look at death. He's thoroughly modern, you see. She hasn't laid eyes on him for two days.

DOCTOR.

How do you know?

VEDRENNE.

Says so in her prayers, of course.

DOCTOR.

What?

VEDRENNE.

[*Nodding.*] Prays that she may never see him again. "He's a naughty, strong, wicked man." So he's bound to turn up here soon. Something must happen or——

DOCTOR.

The world will lose a very entertaining poet.

VEDRENNE.

Thanks very much. As it has been so beautifully expressed,

"Oh, to be wafted away from this pale accedama of sorrow,
Where the dust of an earthly today is the earth of a dusty tomorrow!"

But you know anything is better than this prolonged torture of unconfirmed suspicion. It isn't that I should mind so much being buried alive; *that* would be an experience—but how could I ever express myself about it?

DOCTOR.

And if you should find your suspicions confirmed, *how* could we get around the statement that you poisoned yourself?

VEDRENNE.

Doesn't poison wear off—sometimes?

DOCTOR.

If the poison were to wear off, it would be an insult to the apothecary; and I couldn't allow that.

VEDRENNE.

Why not?

DOCTOR.

It's my duty to protect his interest. We—we are all in the union, so to speak.

VEDRENNE.

All? In the union?

DOCTOR.

Yes. Doctors, apothecaries, *pretty* trained nurses, proprietors of rest cure resorts, undertakers, the clergy——

VEDRENNE.

Enough. The undertaker will help me out of this.

DOCTOR.

He's already helped you in; and you forget he was bribed, and no honest man ever goes back on his briber. It would hurt him so, professionally. [VEDRENNE *groans.*] Really, Harry, you *would* be obliging the union, besides simplifying matters hugely, if you'd only consent to remain dead until after the funeral.

VEDRENNE.

I'll think it over, but it isn't a pleasant prospect.

DOCTOR.

After all, it was a shabby trick to play on Mrs. Vedrenne.

VEDRENNE.

Not shabby—original. Besides, it hasn't come off yet—worse luck!

DOCTOR.

But you can't go on lying like this—think of your reputation.

VEDRENNE.

I'm thinking rather of my skin. [*Steps are heard off.*]

DOCTOR.

[*Pushing* VEDRENNE *down into the casket.*] Shhh!

VEDRENNE.

[*Huskily.*] Mind, I don't promise. You'd better prepare her for a surprise.

[Enter Olga Vedrenne, left. *She is a divinely and practically beautiful woman in a slinking black, tight-sleeved, high-necked night-gown; carries a long jeweled staff in one hand, in the other a pocket-handkerchief, with which she is continually touching her brow and dabbing at her eyes. Wailing plaintively, she crosses to casket, not at first seeing the* Doctor.]

Olga.

[*Sniffing the smoke.*] What's this? Smoke? In my Henry's sacred chamber?

Doctor.

Good morning, Mrs. Vedrenne.

Olga.

[*Starting.*] Oh, how you startled me, doctor. How dare you startle one so early in the morning?

Doctor.

I beg your pardon.

Olga.

And smoking too—in my dear, dead Henry's presence!

DOCTOR.

Fumigating.

OLGA.

But why are you here, doctor?

DOCTOR.

[*After a pause.*] I came with the lingering hope that perhaps I had been mistaken. . . .

OLGA.

[*Muddled.*] Isn't it a little late for that?

DOCTOR.

Poisons don't always prove—fatal.

OLGA.

[*Peevishly.*] I thought I was a widow. You gave me to understand I was a widow; I've ordered all my mourning. I won't hear of such a thing!

DOCTOR.

My dear Mrs. Vedrenne, I'm only a doctor; and we doctors are likely to change our diagnosis at any time. It's a privilege of the profession.

OLGA.

A loophole for lunatics.

DOCTOR.

Just supposing——

OLGA.

Suppose nothing. I'll call in another—lunatic. I refuse to have my plans upset.

DOCTOR.

[*Alarmed.*] For all our sakes don't do that.—I—I'll see that your wishes are respected.

OLGA.

Then leave me—leave me alone—with my dead.
[DR. WAGSTAFF *bows, crosses to door* RIGHT.]

DOCTOR.

Good morning. [EXIT RIGHT.]

[OLGA *begins to weep again, kneels at the casket, staff in hand, prays.*]

OLGA.

[*Beginning more in exclamation than in supplication.*] O God, I'm so tired! Your world bores me always to tears—[*Cries.*] especially the men in it. Not one of them is really desirable—altogether desirable. One or two of them have one or two good points, for which I am reasonably grateful, O God. Dear, dead Henry had a good point; his eyes were soulful. If he could only have combined his soulful eyes with Tom's dreadful fists! O Lord, I could have been happy with both of them, but never with either of them. Why don't you make another world, O God? This little world is *so* little. What chance have we women to grow—upward—into our own? [*Rising wearily, wiping her eyes.*] O God!

[ENTER TOM BRADFORD, *Left. He is dark and almost piggishly stocky, of the prosperous and pampered broker type; a brute in broadcloth. His trousers are striped, and his boots have fancy uppers.*]

BRADFORD.

[*Advancing, as he sees* OLGA.] Ahem! [OLGA *starts. In a rasping, blatant voice.*] Well, dearest! They told me you were not with the cook, so I thought I'd find you here.

OLGA.

[*Dramatically.*] How could you intrude on my devotion, Tom? Leave me—with my husband.

BRADFORD.

[*Coming closer.*] Can't be done. You've refused to see me for nearly three days; now that I've found you I'm not going to give you up again.

OLGA.

Beast! [BRADFORD *chuckles delightedly. Biting her lip.*] My pet name for you, I'd forgotten. Oh, Tom, go away. There's a good boy. Have you no reverence?

BRADFORD.

Only for you. Besides, my girl, you don't mean all this; you don't care for him. Oh, I'm on! This business is pose. You think it's attractive; and it *is,* very becoming—but it's lost on Harry, so why keep it up?

OLGA.

[*Soulfully.*] We care most for what we know we can't have——

BRADFORD.

[*Continuing.*] Any longer. You think you love your husband now that he is dead. Just as you loved me when he was alive. Just like a woman.

OLGA.

You made a wreck of my life.

BRADFORD.

If I did, it was my own building up.

OLGA.

Ugh! If I only had my Henry back I'd live my life quite differently.

BRADFORD.

You say that because you think it sounds well—and because you know you can't have him back. People always talk like that when they're sure there's nobody to call their bluff.

OLGA.

If you'd only leave me alone now you'd see how true I'd be to the memory of my dear, departed one.

BRADFORD.

Bull, darling.

OLGA.

[*Violently.*] I wish you were in my husband's place!

BRADFORD.

[*Chuckling.*] Well, I'm *not* far from it.

OLGA.

When you're away, Tom, I'm strong enough; when you come near me my good sense begins to weaken and my senses to waken. [BRADFORD *moves closer to her.*] Oh, my Henry! How I miss him!

BRADFORD.

Harry's probably spouting verses to the angels now, and having them set to harp-music.

OLGA.

That's most indelicate. He had a wonderful imagination; so very sensitive; with the intuition of a woman.

BRADFORD.

A man proves things only by setting spies.

OLGA.

He was too honorable for that.

BRADFORD.

Too dense, dear girl.

OLGA.

He died of neglect and hard——

BRADFORD.

He died of poison. What's the difference how he died, so long as he gave you to me? [*Comes closer still.*]

OLGA.

You are the devil's agent.

BRADFORD.

Yes.

OLGA.

Home-breaker!

BRADFORD.

His house-agent! Yes. [*Tries to take her in his arms.*]

OLGA.

[*Fighting him off and crying out.*] Don't, don't! I love my Henry! I love my Henry still!

BRADFORD.

And he is so still.

OLGA.

[*As* BRADFORD *succeeds in embracing her.*] Don't! I love—I love—you too—I can't fight it. [*Sighs profoundly as* BRADFORD *kisses her.*] I love you, Tom.

[*From the casket comes a deep, hollow laugh.* BRADFORD *is frightened.* OLGA *is curious.*]

OLGA.

Did you hear?

BRADFORD.

Of course I did.

OLGA.

It's the third day. His spirit is returning—the day of resurrection.

BRADFORD.

That's it! [*With sudden thought.*] Then your lent is nearly up.

[*The same laugh again.* OLGA *runs to door up* LEFT. BRADFORD *follows, trying to calm her.* EXEUNT *both,* LEFT. VEDRENNE *sits up in casket, blows out candles one by one. Darkness.* BRADFORD *opens door up* LEFT, *peers in,* ENTERS. *After a moment is heard the sound of someone choking as if in being strangled; then the noise as of a body being dragged across the floor.* OLGA RE-ENTERS, *nervous, whimpering, and switches on wall-standard lights.* VEDRENNE, *discovered* RIGHT, *comes toward her with arms outstretched;* OLGA *screams and swoons. He hastens to support her.* BRADFORD *is nowhere to be seen. Presently* OLGA *opens her eyes and shudders.*]

VEDRENNE.

[*Smiling.*] I've come back, my love.

OLGA.

Henry, this is too bad of you, you know how I hate shocks.

VEDRENNE.

[*Beaming.*] Never mind that now. You have proved to me that you love—me fairly well. That is the important thing. And I still have my eyes. You can explain your prayer later. But I understand all and I forgive all:

Oh sunshine of life,
Oh nice pleasant weather;
My cosmetic wife,
Let us make-up together!

OLGA.

I wish you had been as thoughtful of my feelings as you were of my philanderings.

VEDRENNE.

I don't believe you realize—I have forgiven you. [*Tries to kiss her.*]

OLGA.

[*Turning away.*] I'm not sure I shall forgive you for "setting spies."

VEDRENNE.

What! After all you admitted? And when I give you the chance you were asking for to live differently?

OLGA.

And what's to become of all my lovely mourning?

VEDRENNE.

Why not wear your Lucile shrouds for Tom—my love? [*Pointing to settle. To her.*] But I've given him what he deserved. I did come back spiritedly, what?

OLGA.

[*With a shudder.*] I think you show very poor spirit. You did it in the dark.

VEDRENNE.

The nicest things are always done in the dark.

OLGA.

[*Turns away from him, pretends to weep.*] Tom was at least a man. He used to kick me when I was romantic, beat me when I was nervous, choke me when I talked too much. Poor, dear Tom. How can I live without——

VEDRENNE.

Olga! [BRADFORD *moves, stretches, sits up, and yawns—from the settee.*]

BRADFORD.

Harry, it's no use, you'd better give it up. [VEDRENNE *staggers a little;* OLGA *beams delight.*]

VEDRENNE.

Then you're not dead either? I call that most inconsiderate. How the deuce am I ever to explain to the Bishop now? [*Turns toward casket, throws his hands out in despair.*]

OLGA.

I think it's very delightful of Tom to turn up again—so informally like this to please me. [*Surveys them critically.*]

BRADFORD.

[*To* VEDRENNE.] Do you hear that?

VEDRENNE.

Yes. First she blames you for her unfaithfulness, then——

BRADFORD.

Then she finds fault with you for forgiving her.

VEDRENNE.

She isn't content with me alive——

BRADFORD.

And she isn't satisfied with me dead!

VEDRENNE.

What's the *use* of talking?

OLGA.

Tom, I wish you had Henry's eyes.

BRADFORD.

What!

OLGA.

Henry, I wish you had Tom's fists.

VEDRENNE.

Good heaven! [VEDRENNE *and* BRADFORD *look at each other—shake their heads at* OLGA.]

OLGA.

Henry, you like London. You are dead—to the world. You go to London. For six months each year I shall be there—with you. Tom, you adore the Midnight Frolic. Six months each year with you at the Frolic. Oh, I'm serious. Why should a man forever suppose that he can be all things to a woman, any more than a woman can be to a man? We always used to have to be content to hear about your sorrows and overhear your joys. Now it's Harry's turn to sit by the fire and cuddle his ideals to sleep while I take Tom and cuddle *him* to——

VEDRENNE.

Olga!

OLGA.

To death. No! Not another word. I've thought the whole thing out; prayed it out—to my entire satisfaction—and God's I am sure. You men have taught *us* to think all the things you do and do all the things you shouldn't—so you must take the consequences. *I'm* going to have a soul mate as well as a mess mate, too.

[ENTER JUDSON, RIGHT.]

JUDSON.

The Bishop is here, Madam. [*All are frozen for the moment.* OLGA *is the first to thaw out.*]

OLGA.

Quickly! The cover of the casket! [*It has a roller top cover like an office desk.*] You, Tom—close it over. [*He obeys dumbly.*] Now, Harry, you hide.—[VEDRENNE *slips behind hangings of wall.*]

JUDSON.

[*Announcing.*] The Bishop.

[OLGA *crosses to the casket, leans over it, laughs hysterically.*]

[ENTER THE BISHOP. *He is a fat and foolish person in elaborate scarlet clericals.*]

BISHOP.

[*Crossing to* OLGA, *taking her laughing for weeping.*] My dear Mrs. Vedrenne, *now* try to control your grief. *I am here.* [OLGA *breaks out afresh.*]

BISHOP.

[*Patting* OLGA'S *hand.*] My child, let us remember the sublime truth as one of our *minor* poets has so divinely expressed it—— [*Placing hand on casket.*] There are no dead here.

OLGA.

True, Bishop—there are no dead—if we are quick—enough. [*Again she breaks out into a hysterical laugh.*]

CURTAIN.

"FIGURATIVELY SPEAKING"

"FIGURATIVELY SPEAKING"

(A RARE RAID IN ONE ACT)

BY

FELTON ELKINS

The author wishes it clearly understood that no reflection is intended toward that very great little island—country-seat of Empire. Since no democracy does he hold in so great and grateful esteem. The place of scene is chosen as being more descriptive of the "moment" (America having merely been dangerously infested, never aerially visited by the Hun); the British uniform employed solely for its expression of smartness as well as good sense; and Lady Diana, purely because her type is, and always will be—geographically akin; despite the fact that we are to have a new and safer map to live in.

CHARACTERS.

CAPTAIN SIR SAMPSON DASHER (*with a V.C., M.C., D.C.M., and D.S.O.*)

LADY DIANA DASHER (*his wife, beside other things*).

LIEUT. THE HON. FEATHERBRAINE DANGERFIELD (*of the War Office*).

MONSIEUR DE TRIPE (*a hairdresser with a medal from the King of Montenegro*).*

DELPHINE (*Lady Diana's French and personal maid—of all work*).

SCENE: *The boudoir-bedroom of* LADY DIANA'S *tiny house in Mayfair, London, W.*

TIME: *midwinter,* 1917.—*Evening.*

SETTING: *The "Frame" represents the 2nd floor of a plain small house front with, just visible, the top ledges of the three first-story windows and above a low Mansard roof. Behind which are seen the tops of stark, centurion trees against a leaden, vespers sky. On "lights up" (through the gauze drop) is revealed the interior of 2nd floor. Its decor is in watermelon pink. The furnishings are conspicuous —by their absence; they consist chiefly of a poudreuse, back* CENTER, *canopied in blue with silver tassels; and, "recessed"* RIGHT, *on a low raised dias, a "lit de repos" covered in rose and silver brocade—a robe of ermine thrown over the end. Opposite* LEFT,

* Not a Frenchman but a "camouflaged" Swiss.

a coal fire burns in the grate of a yellow marble mantelpiece. Near it a deep, low, many-cushioned settee, facing "front." Two black lacquered chairs and a Chinese table casually placed—for conventions sake. The lighting is denoted by crystal wall-brackets with rose-colored shades. The Exits down LEFT *and back* LEFT, *draped in two toned taffeta. On the walls are French prints, in character and out of costume.*

AT RISE. *The whole façade is dark.*

Lights suddenly up in Boudoir, by the maid, DELPHINE.

DISCOVERING *the Honorable and very masculine* DASHER, *with many parti-colored citation ribbons, in a simple service uniform; seated on the settee with the very blonde,* DIANA [*in appeal as well as attire.*] *Both in estatic embrace.*

DIANA.

[*With no usual "start," just taking her lips off his, no more.*] What time is it now, Delphine?

DELPHINE.

[*In good English with French intonation.*] Twenty past six, m'lady.

DIANA

[*Releasing him, and with as much emotion as one might use in a commentary on the weather.*] Dasher!

We must have been kissing steadily since twenty to five.

DASHER.

Small wonder, m'dear, when I've been twenty weeks out at the front. [*Sighs heavily.*]

DELPHINE.

[*To* DIANA.] Monsieur le low-ten-on, the Honorabl' Featherbraine Dangerfield, teleph'n thro' from the War Office, m'lady.

DIANA.

[*Now "starting" to her feet in real alarm.*] Oh, no, Delphine!

DELPHINE.

To say there have been a "warning"—off the Cornish coast.

DIANA.

[*To* DASHER.] You've no notion how terrified I am—[*Adding quickly.*] of the raids!

DASHER.

Haven't I though? Remember the time we went down to stop with your people in Kent? And a stray bomb lodged near 'em—got in such a funk, they dropped their knitting, their false teeth, and even their h'es.

[*Takes one of her hands, pats it with soldierly reassurance.*] Nothing to fear with *me* about, Diana, what? [*As she seems uncertain.*] I say you *are* fond of me, dear girl?

DIANA.

Can you doubt—— [*Kissing him in a way to dismiss even her own.*] I see so little of you now-a-nights. [DELPHINE *turns to withdraw—she may be right.*]

DASHER.

Oh!—eh—Delphine. Fetch up a half-bottle of that Lanson, will you, I'm famished.

DELPHINE.

Bien, Sir Sampson.

DASHER.

And don't trouble about my kit, I'll see to it [*With a meaning look to* DIANA.] after—er—later on. [DELPHINE *does withdraw—she may be wrong.*]

DIANA.

[*Putting off his Englishman's awkward display of affection.*] Now do stop long enough, dear boy, to let me tell you—something—I feel I ought——

DASHER.

[*With the same heavy sigh as before.*] Well, if you insist; what *have* you been doing [*Taking out pipe and filling it.*] with your—er—loose moments, Diana?

DIANA.

[*Going to dressing table and "making up" for lost nerve.*] Oh! standing in queques to keep *down* my figure—I'm very well-rationed as you see—and making friends with women to keep *up* appearances.

DASHER.

The Lord knows you need 'em [*Explaining artfully.*] with that apparent-ly beautiful figure. [*Lights pipe and seating himself.*] Um—and since I was last home from France, who is your latest *woman* friend?

DIANA.

A very reliable old dowager; nothing like a contrast —excepting a new man, to attract attention to a woman, you know. [*Getting a photograph in a large lacquer frame.*] In fact the only thing we really have in common is the same hairdresser.

DASHER.

[*Involuntarily.*] Not de Tripe? [*Pronouncing it like that part of a cow's stomach.*]

DIANA.

[*Handing him photograph.*] Why yes, how clever of you; when I've only just been having him——

DASHER.

Why, I've heard of him for years—sour old bounder.

DIANA.

Merely because he has a "maitresse" he must still keep up—[*With a shrug.*] and he is far too old. [*Pronouncing him with a French accent.*] But Monsieur de Tripe is a connoisseur——

DASHER.

[*Impatiently.*] In collecting scandal no doubt. [DASHER *looks at photograph.* DIANA *looks her fear.*]

[RE-ENTER DELPHINE *with champagne, and two long-stemmed lavender glasses, on an oval tray. Sets it down and goes again.*]

DASHER.

[*Holding photograph at full length.*] Why this is old Lady Dangerfield.

DIANA.

[*Seemingly too preoccupied in not overpouring the champagne, except to whisper:*] Featherbraine Dangerfield's mother——

DASHER.

[*Thoughtfully.*] Who telephoned over from Whitehall to give you the "warning." [*Rising with a laugh.*] I've no doubt, Diana, you'll be considerate enough to return the compliment——

DIANA.

[*Now in control of herself, so on the offensive.*] No, my dear Dasher—*now* there seems no longer to be any necessity. [DASHER *nods, taking up his glass from salver and merely shrugs.*]

DIANA.

[*Baffled by silence, so on the defensive.*] I suppose you have been quite true to me during your weeks "en repose"? [*Raises glass and sips.*]

DASHER.

[*After finishing his.*] Oh, yes, excepting life's little —er—necessities.

DIANA.

[*Savagely, pushing back a blonde lock.*] Ha! Amusing women, these French, are they not?

DASHER.

Oh! Er—no—[*Filling their glasses.*] all—brunettes, you understand? [*Raising his glass and touching hers.*] But here's to the most faithless of women, the most bewitching of wives—since—the fair Lady Hamilton——

DIANA.

[*Melting.*] You always *did* make me such delicious compliments, dear thing. [*Suddenly, and setting down glass.*] How piggish I've been!

DASHER.

Not at all, m'dear! *I've* been at war——

DIANA.

[*Covering her face with her hands.*] Oh! Dasher, you *do* make me feel ashamed—if only you wouldn't be so modern, so natural—and sweet—— [*Uncovering her eyes.*] Don't you care for me any longer?

DASHER.

Assuredly, I do, my dear, but you *have* been an exceedingly naughty girl. War is assuredly Hun. While we are trying to do for them on the West front, you're doing just like them in the West End.

DIANA.

[*"Making a face" which he misunderstands; swiftly.*] I was only comparing *you* in my mind with Dangerfield——

DASHER.

And what sort was he—to—er—love, you know—? [DIANA *turns away.*] Rather not? Well, as a dinner companion, then? [DIANA *shrugs.*] Surely, Diana, he cared to dance with you of an evening and spare your feelings of a morning.

DIANA.

In the evening he was forever restless; at least he was always looking at his watch.

DASHER.

[*Sincerely.*] Poor Dangerfield.

DIANA.

Oh! you needn't pity *him*—I'm a simple wreck from trying to entertain him—— [*Suddenly.*] Dasher, why *can't* lovers be more like—husbands?

DASHER.

Ho, you can't expect a mere lover to learn in a few weeks what I have been able to study for several years. [*A whistle-like bell is heard off.* DASHER *jumps.* DIANA *retains her calm.*]

DASHER.

What—the deuce's that?

DIANA.

It may be the "warning"—[*Smiling.*] to "take cover." [*As* DASHER *mops forehead with handkerchief.*]

One'd have thought you'd become used to so monotonous a thing as Danger—[*hastily*]—with bravery badges such as yours. [*Touching his ribbons.*]

[ENTER DELPHINE.]

[DIANA *hastens to her;* DELPHINE *whispers;* DIANA *whispers; they both whisper.*]

DASHER.

[*His nerves still on edge.*] Dem it all! Can't you tell me if it *is* Dangerfield?

DIANA.

[*Turning to him.*] Worse, oh! worse!

DASHER.

What on earth could be?

DIANA.

The hairdresser! de Tripe! If he should discover *you* here—dear boy; before morning, old Lady Dangerfield'd have it; Featherbraine be told, and *every one* cut me——

DASHER.

It mustn't come to that! [*Frightened into action of thought very rare to most officers.*] Utterly absurd this! Quite simple I should think—send him straight off again!

DELPHINE.

[*With a little shriek.*] Not have m'lady's hair dress'? Imposeebl', Sir Sampson!

DIANA.

My decoration, Dasher, is just as important to my vanity, as yours [*Tapping ribbons.*] *are* to you.

DASHER.

Couldn't you wear a hat——?

DIANA.

What! go out, with a raid on?

DELPHINE.

[*To* DIANA.] And the cutlets, m'lady?—what does become of the beautiful cutlets? [*to him.*] When it have taken m'lady all the week to collect them, Sir Sampson.

DIANA.

[*Waving* DELPHINE *to silence; to* DASHER.] No, I have given up many things for men, my dear, *but*—go without my cutlets and my coiffeur, *that* is asking too much, Dasher.

DASHER.

[*With a resigned shrug—looking about him.*] Where would you suggest that I go m'dear?

DIANA.

Oh! [*Glancing about her too.*] That's the worst of these early Victorian houses, there *is* no place of hiding——

DASHER.

[*Sarcastically.*] Doubtless I *could* wait in the bath, that *at least* has modern appliances.

DELPHINE.

But this is m'lady's shampoo night, Sir Sampson. Monsieur de Tripe never permit anything to confuse with the shampoo.

DASHER.

[*Metaphorically exploding.*] Dem it all, that this—veritable piece of tripe should dare—dem it all—er—throw him into the street!

DIANA.

Splendid! The very place! Why didn't we think of it before? Doubtless because it was so obvious—— [DASHER *looks satisfied.*] *You* shall go down and stop in the street, Dasher. [*He snorts with surprised and injured dignity.*] Oh!. but only just long enough to get the hairdresser up; then you may wait in the drawing-room, until—[*Leaning closer, then remembering* DELPHINE.] if you're a nice *good* thing—now trot!—[*cooingly.*] Do.

DASHER.

[*Like a child.*] Should like to be in on just one victory in three years, even a domestic one'd do; however—— [*Bows and follows* DELPHINE *off.*]

[DIANA *uses the "time space" in adjourning to bath, at back; returning with a large "furry," purplish-yellow towel about her shoulders, which she fastens with long gold safety pin from poudreuse; over this she slips a bright-striped silk rubber cape.*]

DE TRIPE.

[*Heard "off," with a quite evident Strassburg Swiss accent.*] Oh, Zeut! but my life is become one long waiting—like the war; already I have appointment to dress the hair of Dowager Dangerfield after—oh, Mon Dieu! I am annoyed with the life, Mademoiselle, and when I am annoy! Look around! Some woman she suffer.

[DE TRIPE *comes "on" with* DELPHINE *and small black bag; he is bullet-headed, but grey-whiskered and frock-coated.*]

DIANA.

[*Sweetly.*] Ah! Bon soir, Monsieur.

DE TRIPE.

Bon *nuit,* Madame. In Zurich—[*Hastily correcting.*] Vevey, one is hairdresser, not attendant sur le plaisir d'un mari. Je suis etonne——

DIANA.

Je suis enervee, ne me fachez pas! [DE TRIPE, *hastily assists in removing pins from her hair.*] Monsieur de Tripe. [*Coldly.*] You are in grave error, it is not—the Capitain my husband who is here——

DE TRIPE.

Monsieur le lou-ten-on Danjerfiel'—he will be mos' happie to discover *that* your captain is to remain the night with you. [*More pleasantly sarcastic.*] No one would he rather see in his place.

DIANA

You remember that new perfume?

DELPHINE.

[*To him.*] That for two pound ($10) a bottle?

DE TRIPE.

[*Opens small black bag.*] Il est superbe—like Monsieur le Capitain, a little too dear at the price, peut etre —non? [*Takes out an odd-shaped, brightly colored bottle.*]

DIANA.

If I give you an order for ten of these, [*Tapping the bottle.*] will that suffice to convince you——

DE TRIPE.

Twenty pound? [*Holds up bottle and spanks it lovingly.*] Absolument! Merci, merci, bien madame.

DIANA.

Mais, vous savez—pourquoi?

DE TRIPE.

Parfaitment, madame, pour dix bouteilles I do not discover——

DELPHINE.

Monsieur Sir Sampson's kit downstair'; so he is not arrive! [*Takes bottle and kisses it.*]

DIANA.

[*To* DE TRIPE.] Votre parole d'honneur?

DE TRIPE.

[*Lightly.*] Ah! mais oui, ma parole d'honneur.

DIANA.

Bon. [*Arising.*] Alors, allons. [*Goes into bath.*]

[DELPHINE *turns out lights in Boudoir.*]

[*At Back of roof, strong, thin shafts of searchlight are visible, playing tag with the clouds.*]

DE TRIPE.

[*Startled—but polite.*] Pourquoi, Mademoiselle, la lumiere?

DELPHINE.

We expect, mon cher ami, a visit from ze Hun——

DE TRIPE.

Ah! Mon Dieu! [*Thows up his hands.*] And I am so terrify!

DELPHINE.

Of their black cartes de visites? [*Laughs as he goes into bath.*]

[*The bell again, and at the same moment the short, sharp whistle of a police warning.* DELPHINE EXITS *quickly.*]

[*There is a still hush, except for the shuffle of many hurrying feet, and here or there a motor-bus horn.*]

DE TRIPE.

[RE-ENTERING *almost immediately.*] Non, non, I am positive, Madame, I hear the "warning."

DIANA.

[*With hair tossed about, following him.*] I tell you it was the house bell. Come, Monsieur, my hair! We have always spent at least an hour——

DE TRIPE.

Bet *I* always spend ze air-raid in a drawing-room. [*Starts for it.*]

DIANA.

[*Holding him back.*] Oh, don't behave such a coward.

DE TRIPE.

Bet I am a coward. I am proud for being a coward. [*Struggling to get free.*] It is origenal at leas' now-a-day!

[RE-ENTER DELPHINE *with most of* DASHER'S *kit, including his Sam Browne belt, with sword frog and revolver case.*]

DELPHINE.

Lou-ten-on Dangerfield is arrived, m'lady. He begs if you excuse him not coming up as the first warning has been sound and he say he alway spend the air-raid in a drawing-room.

DIANA.

[*As* DELPHINE *"takes over"* DE TRIPE.] But Delphine, where is Sir Sampson?

DELPHINE.

Stopping in the street, m'lady.

DIANA.

Right so far! [*Another "warning" is heard.*] But oh, *now* what am I to do! [*Discovering* DELPHINE *in the act of what she takes to be hugging* DE TRIPE.] What are *you* doing?

DELPHINE.

[*Calmly.*] I take the pracaution of attempt to tickle him to death, m'lady—verry few old gentleman can resist it.

DIANA.

[*Desperate—so forgetting herself.*] de Tripe, I will give you the twenty quid on the spot, or name your own figure if you will only brave it into this "show," and "take cover" next door.

DE TRIPE.

[*Indicating the button on his lapel with one hand and struggling against* DELPHINE *with the other.*] J'ai recu zis medal from le Roi de Montenegro for 'aving so superb fear in the first cutting of 'is Crown Prince' hair—so what I care for you! *I* am decorate for a coward. [*Wrenching free of* DELPHINE.] Now I go now to ze drawing-room.

DELPHINE.

Mais, vous oubliez pas votre parole d'honneur!

DE TRIPE.

Zeut, [*Snapping his fingers.*] pour ma parole d'honneur, in Zurich—[*Turns to bolt, but instead in the arms of the* ENTERING DASHER.]

DASHER.

[*Throwing him aside and out.*] Do hope you won't object to my running up, Diana, I——

DIANA.

Oh, no, I didn't fancy you stopping out in the raid—— [*Beams warmly on him, then remembering.*] But *he's* here now.

DASHER.

Who is, m'love?

DIANA.

Dangerfield, my dear.

DASHER.

The deuce he is! Then I can't afford to lose a moment—think of your reputation.

DIANA.

But the raid! *On* any moment now——

DASHER.

—of course, it is! Where the devil's my kit—not below.

DELPHINE.

I take ze pracaution, Sir Sampson—— [*Hangs it about him; duffle bag, Sam Browne belt and all.*]

[*Now there is heard the dull sobbing thud and like the spontaneous combustion of a million electric lamps, the bursting report of a bomb.*]

DIANA.

Oh! you're too late.

DASHER.

Nonsense, this is a mere *pony* show——

DIANA.

But the shrapnel! It falls all about here.

DASHER.

Believe me—I'm a jolly sight less afraid of the consequences of shrapnel than shampoo. [*Pointing below.*]

DIANA.

de Tripe—great Heavens! He must have told Dangerfield by now.

[*But the "anties"—anti-aircraft guns—have begun their bad average target practice at hitting heaven; their chorus like giant-powered motors before a Grand Prix; the sky full of spitting flames.*]

DASHER.

[*After a lull.*] Now, I'm off—take care of yourself, Diana.

DIANA.

[*Distracted, pleading.*] But I won't hear of it, Dasher—don't behave such a child. [*Desperately.*] Delphine, can't you think of some precaution *again?* [DELPHINE *has already slipped* DASHER'S *revolver from its holster, and now hands it over to* DIANA. *To* DASHER *at door, pointing it at him.*] Now! I'm not going to see you killed if I can help it! "Kamerad!" [DASHER *flings up his hands—as if by second nature, then laughs, drops them, and turns to door which he throws open, to find: The Honorable* FEATHERBRAINE DANGERFIELD *standing in its entry; delicate looking, and delightfully done in uniform, with staff tabs and monocle; as* DIANA *is saying:*] Oh! I can't hold him back another instant—— I don't know how to get the wretched thing to go off!

DANGERFIELD.

Great God!—I say, Dianesque, do put the toy away—can't you see, you might by chance kill *me!* [*Crosses and takes it from* DIANA, *turning to* DASHER *who is sneaking out.*] Captain Dasher—no need to pop off into that show. I know everything. I mean to say——

DIANA.

So do be sensible, dear thing, you might be "done in" out there, you know.

DANGERFIELD.

Ratheur it'd—look so nasty; not easy to explain, an' that sort o' thing.

DIANA.

And as Featherbraine says he—his mother *will* know everything——

DASHER.

Better dead then, dear girl, than *you* at the mercy of any woman who knows everything——

DANGERFIELD.

[*Locking the door as* DELPHINE *leaves, and addressing them.*] Now you will take chat with me, you two. I find you—but *how* do I find you? In a rendez-vous! like two happy lovers—— [*To* DIANA.] You, Diana, in negligee—champagne about—and—all that sort of thing—how am I informed? by a mere hairdresser, of this—event; this re-union—bah! It is unheard of! not good enough. I mean to say——

DASHER.

[*Sadly.*] Does sound a bit rough on you, Dangerfield, what?

DIANA.

Oh! don't be absurd, Dasher.

DASHER.

After all, you have been unfaithful to him, my love.

DIANA.

What rot, my dear, a woman can only be faithful to one man at a time.

DANGERFIELD.

[*To* DIANA.] Understand me—I can quite comprehend your being unfaithful to me, Dianesque, it is quite to be expected—women always grow tired of me—[*With a shrug.*]—why, I do not know—and I could have borne it—if it had been normal—usual—some other chap—and all that sort of thing—*but—this*—is *positively*—in*decent* —really, an outrage—the re-union of a husband and wife—an insult to society, by Jove—it is, you know! [*Looks at both in dejected dignity.* DIANA *laughs enjoyably.* DASHER *gives her a look of reproof.*]

DANGERFIELD.

Understand! I could have borne it if only you had not returned to your *own* husband—someone's else husband, yes, by all means! but your own—*that* is what is

so—immoral! [*Again* DIANA *laughs.* DASHER *frowns. But the rest is cut short by another rehearsal with heaven; for a moment longer,* DANGERFIELD *tries to make himself heard, then he gives up.* DASHER *very casually removes his kit;* DIANA *seats herself, lights cigarette and looks at a "Tattler."* DANGERFIELD *finally seats himself and cleans his monocle. At last—a bomb—a hellish near one—then silence.*]

DASHER.

Well, Dangerfield—— [*To her.*] Diana, what's to be done?

DANGERFIELD.

[*Slipping monocle in eye, crossing his legs, then very offhand to* DASHER.] I think it best, I shoot you. That is done in such cases, I believe. [*Takes* DASHER'S *gun from pocket of his own tunic, examines it critically, then levels it at* DASHER. DIANA *screams, and screens him.*]

DASHER.

[*Quietly, patting her back—in reassurance.*] Don't excite yourself m' dear—I say what a beautiful back you really have.

DANGERFIELD.

[*Agonized—pleading.*] Stop! I've no desire to kill you both——

DASHER.

No fear, Diana. He won't! It *isn't* the thing now—not that we have become cowards, but we *have* become educated—to the meaning of the Sixth Commandment —"Thou shalt not kill;" because one does not *get* rid of grief by killing, only a grievance, and *might* get "twenty years." No, we at last realize that revenge merely means remorse—and you know Dangerfield, one cannot kill remorse, so advise your putting that thing away—it upsets my wife.

DANGERFIELD.

[*Rising on this—and to it; almost screaming.*] "Your *wife!*". How dare you in my presence—so indelicate, I mean to say. But I can be revenged, I will—I can make a proper scandal—what? and I will. . . .

DIANA.

Oh! Dasher, that I can't bear—that we *cannot* afford!

DASHER.

[*Consoling to her, then to* DANGERFIELD.] Why go to all the trouble. [*To* DIANA *again.*] You can divorce me for desertion—at the front. [*To him.*] Then you can marry Diana yourself——

DIANA.

Oh! Don't do anything so banal, so cruel. [*Whispering.*] Featherbraine was bad enough as a lover; God knows I do not want him for a husband! [DASHER *shrugs despairingly—turns away and re-lights his pipe.*]

DANGERFIELD.

[*Sitting down again, his monocle dropping with his hopes.*] Was *I* not treated just like a husband? Did I not have all the petty unpleasantness, the wretched little intimacies—Bah! and all that sort——

DIANA.

[*Sharply to him.*] *Don't* say that again! I shall go mad. And what about you? Never did you anticipate a single wish—without my telling you—never appreciated one of my charming whims——

DANGERFIELD.

[*Sobfully.*] But your charming self——

DIANA.

[*Scoffingly.*] My figure you mean!

DANGERFIELD.

[*Brokenly.*] All I wanted was to love you, Dianesque, and all——

DIANA.

That sort of thing! Ooh! The comparison between you two is comic!

DASHER.

[*Comfortably to* DIANA.] You are cruel rather, though, m' dear, you know.

DIANA.

[*With rage.*] Why—we never even spoke the same language——

DANGERFIELD.

[*Snapping.*] Why, you did nothing, the continual time, *but* talk.

DIANA.

[*To* DASHER.] He had no sense of humor!

DANGERFIELD.

[*To* DASHER.] What man in love ever has time——!

DASHER.

[*More complacently.*] It is the same old tale, you two good people; we men forever persist in idealizing our loves instead of treating them like ordinary human creatures;—[*To* DIANA.]—while you women could never be happy without a grievance and being misunderstood is the most popular of them.

DANGERFIELD.

[*Burying his head in his hands, his monocle swinging between.*] I might as well have married her myself.

DASHER.

Much better. [*As* DIANA *screams out in protest.*] But *you'd* have been much *happier,* dear girl—— [*To both.*] Lovers, you know, are no longer a novelty, they're just a necessary evil, like margerine queques or reprisal raids, or—er——

DIANA.

Hairdressers!

DASHER.

[*As* DANGERFIELD *jumps to his feet and the disperson sounds.*] Now, listen to reason, Dangerfield—there's no romance in being commonplace, is there? Lovers are!

No throbbing excitement, no longer any joy of intrigue, no subtlety, nor imagination in being a lover these days. Since lovers are accepted, and "asked about to stop" and *not* asked to stop. [*The signal "All clear" is heard off, long repeated.*]

DANGERFIELD.

[*Slowly, ominously.*] Can you explain then, Dianesque——?

DASHER.

I'm sure she can, Dangerfield—women can explain anything—but themselves! So it isn't necessary—my advice to you is to go out now it's "all clear" and *get* a wife——

DANGERFIELD.

There seems nothing else for it! [*Savagely, replacing the monocle.*] Then I shall have the laugh, I mean—— [*Hastily correcting.*] I was about to say! on the others—those unfortunate lovers. [DIANA *sighs relief.* DASHER *nods, approving. There is a loud knock at the door.*]

DANGERFIELD.

[*Magnanimously.*] But do tell me, what can I do, to show my—— [*Again the knock.*]

DANGERFIELD.

[*As he turns to door.*] —my gratitude to you both for the temporary inconvenience I've—er—caused in—— [*Opens the door.*]

DE TRIPE.

[*His whiskers awry—his eyes still staring with fright.*] Pardon, Messieurs, Madame, I come for the—— [*As* DIANA *catches her breath, in remembrance; crosses to get small black bag.*]

DIANA.

[*To* DANGERFIELD.] You were saying, Featherbraine —and I'll tell you what you can do—present me with ten bottles of Monsieur de Tripe's new perfume. [DASHER *looks dashed.* ENTER DELPHINE.]

DANGERFIELD.

Gladly—er—how much the figure—price, I mean to —pay?

DELPHINE.

[*Promptly.*] Twenty pounds, sir, if you please.

DIANA.

Delphine—what does this mean?

DELPHINE.

[*With that look of true affection only a woman can show for another.*] Merely, m'lady, that I have taken the pracaution of marrying Monsieur de Tripe after the "banns."

DE TRIPE.

[*Crossing to* DELPHINE.] To protect my gray hair from the—my mistress! [*Bows profoundly—drawing* DELPHINE *out with him.*]

DASHER.

There, you have it, Dangerfield—I tell you it's *the* thing.

DANGERFIELD.

Right, but you can't blame me, sir, for——

DASHER.

Not at all, dear boy——

DANGERFIELD.

Dianesque has a most beautiful figure, you know.

DASHER.

Most interesting figure, yes, good evening.

DIANA.

[*Taking* DASHER'S *hand as* DANGERFIELD *leaves.*] But how we do seem to run to figures, don't we?

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